

DAILY EXPRESS OPINION

MONDAY, JULY 11, 1977

Bright interval

ONE of the consequences of sustained economic failure is that politicians and academics take it on themselves to make forecasts and prophecies unprovoked and unsolicited. Many of these are nonsense, and those from the politicians are designed strictly as a form of psychological warfare—to cheer us up or put the fear of God into us as the necessity arises. The academics are variable but one of the most consistently shrewd and accurate is the Henley Research Centre.

We should therefore listen seriously to its projection that the rate of price increases will fall to 13 per cent by the end of this year. It goes further and suggests that such increases will average between 11 and 12 per cent in 1978.

After all, the recent trade union conferences have called for the next wage increases to be obtained in the new unfettered way. Judging by the specific demands of the miners, the reasonable citizen may feel that now would be an opportune moment to quietly hang himself.

The Henley Centre would regard this as an extravagant reaction. In fact it shows a cool scepticism to the bombast of unionists threatening to do terrible things if they are thwarted.

Certainly some unions will be able to extract much more than the present norm. But the realistic rise in wages which this shrewd team expects for the next 12 months is around 14 per cent, far too high still but by no means the Titanic-meets-iceberg story which some people have envisaged.

The International Monetary Fund is still indicating cash limits and firm control of the money supply. Only by kicking over its obligations to this virtuous creditor and printing money could the Government bring back the nightmare of 1974.

As it is, a Government sector increase of between five and ten per cent is forecast, something which will create more ill-will than inflation. This has to be coupled with indications that falling commodity prices and some promising harvests will make the price index move more gently.

This is the climate in which wage negotiations will take place over the next 12 months. It is nearer to a temperate zone than most of us had thought likely.

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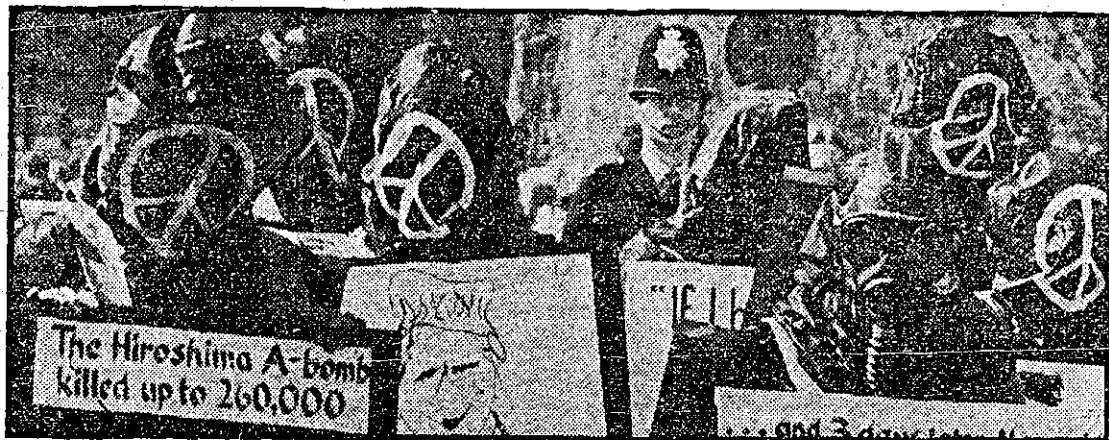
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The fearful face of nuclear protest—but America's powerful neutron deterrent could take us one step back from the kind of disaster the disarmers predict.

THE Kremlin's weekend condemnation of the Neutron Bomb successfully tested by the United States was inevitable.

For this is the most potent counter yet to Russia's main military advantage—her massive superiority in tanks.

Far from being another "weapon of mass destruction"—as the Kremlin claims—the N-Bomb has been developed to reduce civilian casualties and damage in any future war, by taking the conflict away from the towns back to the open battlefield.

Indeed, the weapon exploded in a cavern deep under the Nevada Desert foreshadows the fully automated battlefield fought by machines without a man in sight.

In the nearer future the emergence of the N-Bomb must alter the whole strategy of any land war on the NATO front.

ENSURE

The N-Bomb is really a mini H-bomb brilliantly engineered so that it has the force of only about 100 tons of TNT explosives instead of the usual 1,000,000 tons.

Instead of producing fire and destruction it releases 80 per cent of its energy as an intense shower of invisible particles called neutrons which can pass through armour plate just like X-rays and kill anything in their path.

Since it works by fusing atoms, instead of splitting them, it releases so little radio-active fallout that troops can be air-lifted into an N-Bombed area within 10 minutes.

In short, it is a "clean" nuclear weapon designed to kill invading troops while doing minimum damage to buildings.

Such a bomb has to be tested for two reasons: First to ensure that the mini-trigger and other components work at all. Second to measure what scientists call the "neutron flux"—the extent to which the energy is re-

The blast designed to save lives of civilians



By Chapman Pincher

leased as a burst of neutron particles which act like mini-bullets.

A small amount of blast and fire is unavoidable but the effects of these are almost eliminated if the bomb is exploded 1,000 ft above the ground.

The lethal effect has already been established by small-scale experiments with neutron beams on animals.

It is no coincidence that the weapon's emergence coincides with the production of missiles capable of delivering it with extreme precision.

One such American mis-

sile under development can seek out Russian tanks by the peculiarity of their "signatures"—the noise of the engine and tracks and the silhouette which are peculiar to each type of fighting vehicle.

PRESSURE

There will also be N-Mines to be sown from the air like seeds in front of advancing tanks to put up a "death ray" screen.

There is no conceivable way that men could be protected. Lead suits

would have to be several feet thick.

Main pressure for the advances has come from the West Germans and other front-line NATO peoples who, while depending on the United States Nuclear Umbrella, object to any use of fire atom weapons on their territory.

"What would be the point of resisting a Russian invasion if the result was devastation by our own allies?" they ask.

Further, the Germans like the British, wonder whether the Americans really would use nuclear weapons if the entailed Soviet retaliation on the United States homeland.

GAMBLE

The N-Bomb would be so like a conventional weapon in use that it should carry a much smaller risk of triggering off general nuclear war.

For these reasons, there is little doubt that President Carter will order full scale production of the weapons if he has not already done so.

Giving the Russians the first chance to deplete their would be too great a gamble.

In spite of the Kremlin's censure, it is far advanced with the N-Bomb which have been mentioned in the Red Army manuals for several years.

Britain will automatically have access to them once they are in the NATO stockpiles.

But it is unlikely that the Labour Government will develop them independently, though it could do so following its building of a plant in Dumfriesshire for producing tritium—the super-heavy hydrogen forming the basis of the weapon—but the cost would be great.

There will be many who fear that the production of another kind of nuclear bomb, whatever its purpose, must be yet another step towards disaster.

I'm far more impressed by the fact that since the nuclear deterrent came into being in 1945 Britain and Central Europe have enjoyed almost a third of a century of peace.

Instead of producing fire and destruction the bomb releases an intense shower of invisible particles which pierce armour plate like X-rays